



Preface



I am pleased to present the Environmental Health Services (EHS) Division 2003 Annual Report. Environmental Health is a division of Public Health - Seattle & King County, the tenth largest public health department in the United States. This annual report presents an excellent summary of major Environmental Health programs and services and an overview of the EHS budget. The report provides the opportunity to relay the extent of EH services to policy makers, agency partners, and community members.

Public Health's governing body is the King County Board of Health, made up of eleven elected officials from the county and incorporated cities, and three appointed health professionals. The Board of Health assures local implementation of state environmental health statutes, approves local environmental health rules and regulations, and establishes fee schedules for licenses and permits, among other duties. The EHS division is multi-faceted, funded by collected fees, grants and contracts, and state and local taxes.


I see several major themes in this year's report. First, it clearly documents a strong effort to bring critical environmental health services to all county residents. Second, it makes clear that our community and individual health is impacted by our environment in multiple, often invisible ways. Without the services provided by the Environmental Health Division, the quality of our land, water, air and food would be undermined, in turn negatively influencing our health from cradle to old age.

This year's Annual Report conveys the excellence of the environmental health services that are provided here in Seattle and King County and the exceptional talent and commitment of the environmental health investigators, management, and administrative support staff who deliver them. The EHS Division 2003 Annual Report is available online through the Public Health - Seattle & King County website located at the following address:
www.metrokc.gov/health.

Please enjoy reading about these important and fundamental health services provided by Public Health Seattle-King County.



Alonzo Plough, PhD, MPH
Director and Health Officer
Public Health - Seattle & King County



Welcome!

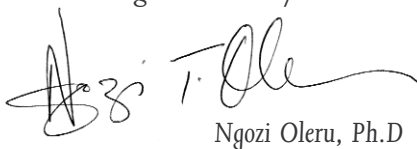
Welcome to Environmental Health Services' 2003 Annual Report. According to the World Health Organization, health is defined as a state of physical, mental and social well being, and not merely the absence of disease or injury. Environmental health refers to all factors in the environment that determine or influence human health, and the environmental strategies we develop to prevent disease and promote health.

Environmental Health Services continually strives to improve community and individual health by carrying out existing programs while embracing and creating new initiatives and partnerships. Our staff of 180 serves over 1.7 million people in Seattle and King County with regulated services and non-regulated programs. Some of our regulated services include health oversight of septic systems, food establishments, landfills, plumbing, pools, and drinking water. Non-regulated programs include guidance for households and small businesses on issues such as hazardous waste management, vector nuisances, indoor environments, water quality, and home food safety. In addition, we collaborate with many government agencies and community-based organizations to protect and promote the health of King County residents.

As you read through this report, you'll get a greater understanding of how each of our programs touches your life on a daily basis. You will also read comments from some of our many excellent professionals who deliver Environmental Health Services every day through education, training, compliance monitoring, enforcement, and partnerships.

In 2003, we began an initiative to involve Environmental Health in the land use planning process, because the quality of land, food, water, and air are largely determined by how we design, construct, and use our environment. The built environment has been shown to be a factor in high rates of obesity and related chronic disease like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and asthma. It is also a contributor to injury, accidents, and to economic and social injustice. By bringing increased awareness of the health impacts of the built environment to the table, our hope is that we will influence the planning and development decision-making process to benefit our many communities' long-term health.

Thank you for taking time to read about Environmental Health Services. For more information on our programs, please click on Environmental Health at our website at www.metrokc.gov/health. Should this report generate questions or comments please email us through the website, and we'll get back to you as quickly as possible.



Ngozi Oleru, Ph.D
Director of Environmental Health Services



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